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TIN CITY

754 (115) Christine Nelson,* a middle-aged Negro woman, admitted that she, too, believed in witches and ghosts and that she knew there was a good deal of conjuring going on in the neighborhood.[15]

"Cunjuh is magic some folks is bawn wid," she explained. "It gibs um powuh obuh tings udduh folks dohn unnuhstan.[32a, *] Dey kin wuk dat powuh fuh good aw bad. Dey kin put spells on yuh an lif duh spell some udduh root wukuh hab put on yuh.[6] Ef a root wukuh break yuh spirit, he kin hanl yuh lak he want tuh. A witch is a cunjuh man dat somebody paid tuh tawment yuh. I know uh folks dat wuz rid so much by witches dat dey jis pine way an die." [69b]

(115) The case of a man who had been conjured was described to us by James Moore.** "He jis mope roun—couldn git spirit nuff tuh wuk. Den all ub a sudden he swell up an duh doctuhs couldn tell wut ail im. We tink he gonuh die.[15] Den 754 long come a man we call Professuh.[48] He say ef we kin git 755 any money he kin lif duh spell.[6] We git some money tuhgedduh and he go out in duh stable an wen he come back he hab a lill black sack. He say dis hab duh cunjuh in it.[8a, b] Den he bile up some mullen leaves and bathe muh frien in um. He tell us tuh keep on doin dis. In two weeks duh swellin 754 go down an he all right. Deah's root men wukin gense yuh all duh time. Dey kin lay tings down fuh yuh an ef yuh walk obuh dis, yuh fall unduh duh spell. Less yuh kin fine somebody else wut kin wuk roots an kin lif duh spell,[6] yuh is doomed.

789 "I kin see duh spirits uh people fo dey die.[59a] Duh spirit 794 is most lak duh natchul pusson but wen I see it I know dat 763 duh pusson will soon die. Attuh a pusson die, I see duh ghos[56] an sometime dey is lak animals,[54] and den agen lak 775 people, jis floatin long lak a piece uh papuh in duh win. Sometime dey hab no head aw feet an dey's alluz dressed in wite.

* *Christine Nelson, Tin City.*
** *James Moore, Tin City.*

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"Witches done ride me plenty times.[69] I spicioned who dey wuz but nebuh could ketch one. Dey alluz tun out tuh be somebody right in yuh neighbuhhood. Yuh kin keep em away by puttin sulphuh roun yuh house aw by placin a knife aw a Bible unduh yuh pilluh.

"Deah's lots uh strange tings dat happen. I seen folks disappeah right fo muh eyes. Jis go right out uh sight. Dey do say dat people brought frum Africa in slabery times could disappeah an fly right back tuh Africa. Frum duh tings I see mysef I blieb dat dey could do dis."

Ozie Cohen * said that he too saw the spirits of people just before they were about to die.[69a] He told us, "Not long ago a frien uh mine wuz sick. Duh night befo he die I see his spirit floatin long befo me in duh street. Duh nex day he pass away. Eben aftuh some uh muh friens die, I see deah spirits nuff tuh know em.[56]

"Hags worry me too. I see um slide in frum noweah. I try tuh call out, den all at once I'm hepless an strugglin.[69] Ef I membuh tuh put a Bible unduh muh pilluh, dey dohn bodduh me.

"I hab heahd duh story bout folks flyin back tuh Africa. I tink it mus be true wen I tink bout how witches kin come tru a keyhole tuhday.[69c]

"Yuh heah lots bout roots an fixin.[15] Folks is alluz sayin somebody bin rooted mos anytime somebody git sick fuh a long spell. Den yuh heah dem sayin, duh sickness ain feah. Dey bin rooted."

Down one long lane and up another we came upon the two or three-room dwelling of the second mayor, George Boddison,** built on the banks of the old rice canal. Boddison came out of his home to meet us. His wrists and arms were encircled by copper wire strung with good luck charms; [8] his fingers were covered with several large plain rings. A cop-

* *Ozie Cohen, Tin City.*
** *George Boddison, Tin City.*

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Children are expected from Sea Island marriages, whether they are the couple's own or just living with them. Children are highly prized regardless of the financial condition of the parents, and abortion is rare and generally viewed as an abomination against God and nature. If a young couple joins a parent's household, rather than establishing a new one, the elder members of the family usually take responsibility for the care and discipline of the children. Many elderly residents, the guardians of several generations of children, attribute their longevity and good health to the belief that they *cannot* die until all the children for whom they are responsible are grown and able to care for themselves, or until their responsibilities are delegated to someone else. Some children are reared by sisters, aunts, uncles, or even distant cousins. It is not unusual for a child to reach adulthood living not more than a block from the natural parent but residing with another relative, who is perhaps childless or more financially secure. Even children born out of wedlock generally know who their fathers and grandparents are. These children are given the same respect in the community as legitimate children and are as likely to be reared by the paternal side of the family as by the maternal side.[45]

The church is probably the most important social organization in the Sea Island communities. Outwardly, the Sunday services follow the patterns prescribed for Baptist and Methodist churches and are thus based on Christian doctrine. Some of the beliefs of black Christians in the Sea Islands are quite distinctive. For example, I have heard many elderly residents speak of a tripartite division of the human being into body, soul, and spirit, whereas Christian doctrine teaches that a person has only a body and a soul which is synonymous with the spirit. According to many elderly island residents, when one dies, only the soul returns to the kingdom of God. The body and spirit remain on earth. And although the soul of the dead person cannot harm the living, the spirit can, at will, cause another to harm him- or herself.[46]

This concept of a tripartite body, soul, and spirit, with the body and spirit remaining on earth after death and able to influence the living, is widespread in West Africa today. Many African peoples do not conceive of any geographical separation between the real world and the spirit world; as soon as the body dies physically, they believe the person arrives in the spirit world.[47] To these physical and spiritual entities, some societies add a belief in a "shadow" entity.[48] The Sea

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Islanders have delineated this three-part concept very precisely. It was described to me by a very religious Sea Island man as follows:

> Listen to me good now: when you die in this world, you see, the . . . the . . . the . . . soul of a man go home to the Kingdom of God, but your spirit still's here on earth. . . .And if you was . . . the devil in all your days . . . your spirit, after you dead, your spirit can do the same thing. Your soul up there, but your spirit de right down de here with the body. . . . And that's the one gone . . . gone do the effect to you. You see now . . . now that's, that's why I say this now. A lot of people don't believe. Say, say . . . say is not ghost. Is ghost there.

The "dream spirit," this man continued, must be permitted periodically to take leave of the body and roam. It therefore leaves the body and wanders all over the world when one goes to sleep. The body is unprotected while the spirit is away, however, and if the spirit should come in contact with a second, evil spirit while it is roaming, it must race back to the body. When this happens, the person may cry out in sleep and become frightened; if the spirit does not come back to the body, the person dies in sleep.[49]

Another distinctive element in the islanders' world view is their belief in voodoo, or hoodoo. This belief involves rituals whereby spirits, good or evil, are conjured up to offer predictions, kill enemies, or perform cures for problems ranging from broken hearts, infertility, and rheumatism to mental illness and cancer. The spirit of one's ancestors is considered the closest link to the spirits of the "other" world. Thus, on the Sea Islands as well as in Africa, spirits are asked to intervene on behalf of a living relative. The belief in voodoo is still so strong in the Sea Island area that Dr. Buzzard, a known practitioner of the occult, maintained a high standard of living from reading signs, effecting certain cures, and appealing to the spirits.

The islanders set great store on preparation for burial and consider it an abomination to die without having made the necessary financial arrangements to be buried at home. Thus some islanders pay on burial policies all of their lives. By tradition a parent starts a burial policy for each child that is born, paying twenty-five to fifty cents per month until the policy is paid in full. It may take one's whole life to pay for all the policies. When the children reach a certain age, the parents usually ask

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Often the test of a good Sea Island minister is how well he can arouse and excite his parishioners. Most of the ministers are from the area and know well the rhetorical skills and techniques necessary to keep a congregation involved in the service. From the time when young children begin going to the church services, they learn that rhetorical skills are to be praised, practiced, and deeply venerated as essential characteristics of learned people. Learning, to the islanders, does not necessarily mean college education. Most of the Sea Island ministers have had no formal education at all, yet they could equal and surpass the most prolific expositors of the canons of rhetoric. For example, though this speaker has never heard of Cicero or studied the classical theories of rhetoric, note the unusual skill with which he makes his plea to the congregation, creating the long, flowing, masterfully constructed phrases characteristic of Ciceronian style:

Heavenly Father
Look at Reverend Pinckney one more time
Who is going to unfold the word of eternal truth
Want you to please, dear Jesus
Give him a silver trumpet
[So] he can coax and call some more ushers into this fold
And then, then, then, my Master
Look at the mistress of ceremonies
Jesus
Want you to plant her feet deep down in the soil, Master
Where she'll never be [up]rooted by the storm of life[54]

Often when a sermon is completed, the minister will begin to sing. It is essential for a Sea Island minister to be a good singer as well as a good speaker. Singing is a regular part of the islanders' daily lives. Many older people sing with fervor and passion as they work in their gardens or in the fields, even when they are alone. Singing is thought to be good for the body, the spirit, and the soul: it enlivens the spirit, which permeates the soul, giving it spiritual strength, and the soul in turn revitalizes the body with physical strength to carry on in times of despair or when physically exhausted. During the church services singing often stirs and excites an already "happy" congregation. When the music begins, some of the congregants throw up their hands, jerking and shaking their bodies in the movements of the shout. The music

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539 personnel did to her, but since that time she never has seen any more.
795 . . . She must have been born with something to be able to see them because she could stand and see them plainly and naturally. Yes, well, a great many people, a great many people that one associates with now can see them. They can see them and point them out to you. "See that person over there." Yes, yes. . . . That's the old devil. Well now, you know that I often exaggerate, but sometimes you walk alone, and if you feel a tremor as if your hair feels strangely on edge . . . that's right. Well, you see, your spirit has touched that evil spirit and your spirit has come back to your body.

• 774 For example, when you go to bed at night to sleep, to rest, the
513 spirit leaves the body and when it leaves it goes in different parts of this country, all over the world. Sometimes when it comes in contact with an evil spirit, it runs back and scares you. You see, your spirit comes back and frightens you and you can neither sleep nor wake up. But if the spirit doesn't return to the body, you know that you are in heaven. In other words, you are not in the body here on earth. Now that's the truth. You get your Bible and read it. That is the truth.

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764 567

ories of Telfair Hodgson, a number of her father's slaves came directly from Africa. The slaves' graves were "always decorated with the last articles used by the departed, and broken pitchers, and broken bits of colored glass were considered even more appropriate than the white shells from the beach nearby." Sometimes the slaves also carved "wooden figures like images of idols," or put a "patchwork quilt" on the grave. One twentieth-century investigator, Samuel Lawton, was told by a number of Sea Island ministers that it was also a common custom to bury articles along with the dead:

> You must not think that just because you do not find anything on those graves that the relatives did not put some things in there. It is most likely that they have a number of things buried with the body. I have often, at the burials I have conducted, seen the relatives pour hamper baskets full of things right down on top of the coffin before the dirt is shoveled into the grave.[17]

764 171

The custom of putting objects both in and on top of graves can be traced to African origins. The Ovimbundu place articles such as baskets, gourds, and instruments used in the burial on top of grave sites. Peoples in the Kongo were said to "mark the final resting-places of their friends by ornamenting their graves with crockery, empty bottles, old cooking-pots, etc." Many ethnic groups of the Windward Coast believed that it was necessary to provide the dead with various gifts, domestic articles, and clothing that could be of use in the life beyond the grave. Such articles, along with food and water, would be left at the grave, so that the spirit of the deceased would come and claim them.[18]

774 775 (171)

Although the Gullahs believed in two spirits, it was the "trabblin" spirit rather than the heaven-going spirit which caused the greatest concern. The reasons given for grave adornment clearly indicate the African precedent. One informant related:

> Yo' see, suh, everybody got two kinds ob speerits. One is der hebben-goin' speerit. . . . Den dere is de trabblin' speerit. . . . De hebben-goin' speerit don't gib you no trouble, but de trabblin' speerit, 'e be de one dat gib you worriment. E come back to de t'ings 'e like. E try fur come right back in de same house.[19]

Some Africans regarded their essential being as divided into "little me in the big me." Apparently "little me" existed before life and would continue to exist after death in the spirit world. This relates to the Gullah informant's idea of two kinds of spirits. The heaven-going spirit, "little me," depending on how one died, would, after death, rest in the

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
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spirit world while the traveling spirit would torment the living. Hence, Gullahs asserted that the last used articles were buried with the deceased to "keep de speerit outen de house." This would go along with the Gullah practice of thoroughly cleaning the deceased's house to break earthly ties. Another explanation which the Gullahs offered was "to satisfy de speerit at de grave." It was said that the spirit desired to be near objects that it loved before death. "Yessuh," stated one informant, "dey puts t'ings on de grave so dey be handy fur de speerit and he be satisfy."[20]

Like Africans, Gullahs had a definite revulsion against the return of the deceased in the form of "trabblin' speerits" regardless of the kind of life the individual had lived. These spirits were considered evil, similar to *kindoki* among the BaKongo. Every effort was made to pacify these "speerits." This is further illustrated by the presence of whiskey bottles on the graves in churchyards. A Gullah minister provided the following explanation:

> When a man is living it take liquid whiskey in he stomach to mak' him drunk, but when a man is dead he don't hab a stomach to hol' de liquor, but it don't take nuttin' but de fumes from whiskey to make a speerit drunk. Dose dat bin used to gittin' drunk fo' dey dies, dey will keep on gittin' drunk after dey dies, so dey t'ink dat de speerit ob a drunkard will hover right in front ob de mout' ob a livin' person when he bin drinkin' so he can whiff de fumes ob de whiskey on he bre't an' dat will make de speerit drunk. But ain't no livin' man want no speerit hover right dere in front ob he mount', so dat is why dey puts whiskey bottles on de drunkard's grave. De whiskey bottles on de graves is empty 'cause de smell is enough to satisfy de speerit an' make 'en drunk.[21]

Gold Coast Africans believed that the spirits made use of all offerings left by friends and relatives after death. Mende carried to the graveside cooked chicken together with rice and red palm oil. This mixture was placed on a banana leaf and laid by the side of the grave. Sometimes soil was dug out and the red rice placed in a hole. Then a little water was placed on the grave and words were spoken: "Here is water, wash your hands, eat your rice, drink your water." The family then ate the remainder of the chicken and rice and offered a prayer, indicating that the family had done right by the deceased and expected the dead to remain there and to protect them:

> We are leaving you as we have finished your last ceremony. We want you, from now on, to look after your children (other members of the family may be mentioned). May no bad thing fall on them.[22]

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754 least in the usual sense of the word. The blacks generally speak about "hags"—beings who have all the powers ascribed to witches and a great 754 deal more. A hag is the disembodied spirit of an old woman who prac- •774 tices witchcraft. She is able to slip off her skin at night and roam about, under the earth, on the earth or above the earth, without anyone being able to see her. A person without skin is always invisible, but it is possible to feel them.

When darkness sets in, the hag who has been in the body during daylight hours, frees herself from the flesh, and proceeds to pursue her dread calling—that of "riding" persons against whom she has spite, or plaguing individuals she has been paid to worry. She is able to slip through the smallest cracks of your house while you sleep. She deposits her skin in the chimney corner. On your back, she pummels you to exhaustion, then sucks your blood. Upon leaving, she cries, "Kin, Kin, you know me," until the skin has fitted itself to the hag's body.

Anybody with common sense knows when he is being ridden by a hag. [828] First he will have unpleasant dreams and every night they become more alarming. Insomnia is a sure sign, as is worrying at night. If the hag is not called off the person will lose his mind.

A hag will ride your enemy for a small pittance.[d]

Supernatural Beliefs

77 "The Negroes who live down on the salt in the Sea Island region of South Carolina are firm believers in a motley variety of supernatural beings. To them the earth is filled with ghosts, plat-eyes, boo-daddies, boo-hags, drolls and spirit animals. Only the educated Negroes who have [369] contact with the big cities of America deny the existence of these outer-world creatures. The rest of the Sea Island blacks are steeped in the same superstitions that their forefathers held in Africa."

795 *Ghosts*—A ghost is very real thing to the Negroes of Edisto and Wadmalaw Islands. A ghost, the materialized body of one who is dead, may be said to have the same dignity as a human being as far as its existence is concerned. The Gullahs say that they know exactly where ghosts could

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be seen, their familiar haunts, the time they have to leave their graves and their time of return.

For instance, all ghosts leave the graveyard at twelve midnight and return at "fust fowl crow"—all but one who is left on guard. They walk ten feet high off the ground, and cover long distances at a surprisingly short length of time. They like certain trees and certain houses. They have never been known to attack a human being physically, but are able to scare one to death.

These spirits are the "on-easy" spirits who are destined for hell on judgment day, but who roam the earth and "hant" the living for they have no place to rest themselves. These "ghosts," "speerits", or "hants" fall into the following categories:[e]

Plat-eye—There are a number of beliefs regarding plat-eye. One is that plat-eye is the spirit of some of "those old timey people what been dead a long time." Another is that plat-eyes come into being when one buries a treasure and places the head of a murdered man in the hole with the valuables. If an intruder approaches the spot, the plat-eye will arise out of the ground in the guise of a six-legged calf or headless hog and frighten the trespasser away.[g]

Boo-bags—are spirits of hags. They are sent to plague and pester the enemies of the voodoo practitioner, or the enemies of the conjure man's clients. The spell can only be removed by a charm made by another doctor-nigger or witch who has superior knowledge of black magic.

Boo-daddies—are the spirits of doctor-niggers and conjure men released from the body of the living at night for dread purposes.

Drolls—are the spirits of young children who died a painful death. They can be heard, the Negroes say, crying piteously at night in deep swamps and deserted marshland.

Spirit-animals—are numerous. One particularly fearsome cat, which sometimes reaches a height of ten feet and explodes before one's eyes when the Lord's prayer is recited backwards, can be seen at Hamilton Hill on Edisto Island, when the moon is young.[b,f,g]

539 775 far as from us to the crick, and Lord you could hear the confusion as it 'carried on' in those woods. Well, these things do exist.... No, everybody can't see them. But if you are sensitive you can feel them. I have a daughter in New York today, and she could on any evening, show you one ghost or two or three ghosts. 'See it standing right there, daddy!' But I couldn't see it to save my dying life. But she had always been frightened by ghosts. Finally, I took her to the hospital and I don't know what the hospital personnel did to her, but since that time she never has seen any more.... She must have been born with something to be able to see them because she could stand and see them plainly and naturally. Yes, well, a great many people, a great many people that one associates with now can see them. They can see them and point them out to you. 'See that person over there.' Yes.... Yes.... That's the old devil. Well now, you know that I often exaggerate, but sometimes you walk alone, and if you feel a tremor as if your hair feels strangely on edge...that's right. Well, you see (774) your spirit has touched that evil spirit and your spirit has come back to your body.

539 774 [513] For example, when you go to bed at night to sleep, to rest, the spirit leaves the body and when it leaves it goes in different parts of this country, all over the world. Sometimes when it comes in contact with an evil spirit, it runs back and scares you. You see, your spirit comes back and frightens you and you can neither sleep nor wake up. But if the spirit doesn't return to the body, you know that you are in heaven. In other words, you are not in the body here on earth. Now that's the truth. You get your Bible and read it. That is the truth.

538 1. *snake* [sinick] ∅ → V / C __ C
193 2. *program* [pogɛm] r → ∅ / C __
[pogɛm] neutralization

21. The verb *say* is formulaic and appears after communicative verbs to introduce objective clauses or direct quotations. This practice is paralleled in Twi, Ewe, Mende and Igbo (Turner 1949:211). Similar constructions occur in Jamaican Creole, Tamil, Bengal, and Marathi.

[197]

22. /nɔ/ is a negative resulting from the assimilation of /no/ and /dɔ/, a form of the verb 'to be'. Before negative transformation, the sentence would read /ɪn dɔ lɔɪ/ 'he is lying.' After negative placement and assimilation, the sentence reads /ɪn nɔ lɔɪ/ 'he is not lying.'

23. /unɔ/ is a pronoun form marking second person in Gullah. It has an identical parallel in Igbo U, NU, (Turner 1949:227).

539 775 775 24. This speaker is deeply religious. The tripartite division of body, soul and spirit is unparalleled in European religions. I was informed by an Igbo consultant that this concept is widespread in West Africa. According to this Gullah speaker, the spirit remains on earth with the body after death, but the soul progresses home to the kingdom of God. Depending on the deceased person's life-style, the earthly spirit may be good or evil. In life,

539 774 the spirit leaves the body periodically to roam and wander

539 while one sleeps. If the living spirit comes in contact
• 774 with an evil spirit, living or dead, while outside of its sleeping body, it will race to return to protect the body. When it returns to the body the person wakes up frightened
[761] as a result of the spirit's experience. If the spirit fails to return to the body, the person dies in sleep.

539 25. When children are born with a caul over their
775 faces, they are thought to be able to see ghosts. This
845 concept is also widespread in inland Black communities. To eliminate the problem at birth, the caul is chopped, cooked and fed to the infant so that it returns to the spirit within the body. It is thought by the islanders that the spirit alone should possess the visionary power.

538 26. Line 18: the phrase *dark the light* is understood by Gullah speakers to mean 'the sun had set', or 'the sun was shrouded by clouds'. Reference is made to the sun in line 26, *The heavier de was getting*, which means the sun was getting lower and lower in the sky.

538 27. Line 19: *Yatta* is the African name given to his
551 mother at birth. *Liza* is her English name, which she used only in business affairs. Turner (1949:40) notes tha- most Gullah speakers use two kinds of given names: one English, called their true name and used in outside communications, and the other a pet or basket name, used among friends and relatives. The practice still continues.

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brown pea liquor as a wash for smallpox, a mixture of lard and mocking-bird bush (cassena) as an ointment for smallpox, soot for cuts, and lemon juice and ashes for colds.

One woman reproved a member of the research staff because he threw away two rats which had been killed in a trap. She said that the rats were just the thing she needed for a tea which she wanted to brew for her ten-year-old son to cure him of bed-wetting. The same woman believed that her failure to "bind" the boy—that is, to wrap cloth tightly around his abdomen—while he was a baby had resulted in his being weak physically. Another woman believed that if a stammering child drank water from a bell he would be cured.

Many mothers with babes in arms will call the baby's spirit when they start home after a visit, believing that the spirit might stay behind and evil consequences ensue unless it is called. It is considered bad luck to let a baby be near the coffin at a funeral. If one is present he is passed over the coffin from one person to another in order to prevent his spirit from accompanying the dead. Mr. Wildy, teacher of blacksmithing at Penn School and a member of the quartet, said that on one occasion his infant was taken to a funeral. He had thought nothing of the superstition, but other people at the funeral became very much disturbed on seeing the baby and would give him no peace until he had passed the child across the coffin.

As elsewhere in the South, the St. Helena people put on the grave the things last used by a person. These are usually china, glasses, pitchers, medicine bottles, and other inexpensive things, but sometimes articles of value are left on the graves—antique clocks, vases, and the like.